

"PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT
IN THE PREPARATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS"

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PORFOLIO ASSESSMENT
IN THE PREPARATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Portfolio assessment for public school student learning has been a recent trend.

scream, "Don't look at me, I am not evil or disgusting. I am just like you and like
you I find your sexual preference unusual but I refrain from laughing and pointing
because I know what it feels like to be hated and humiliated based upon nothing."

Of the 33 teachers who applied, only 6 were selected for admission to the program. Selection was made by officials of the Bryan Independent School District in collaboration with faculty from Texas A&M's Department of Educational Administration. Each successful applicant demonstrated quality performance on the SRI, possessed a record of commitment to public education, and received the endorsement of his/her principal. The program, which culminates in attainment of Texas Mid-management Certification, has a number of salient characteristics:

1. A carefully selected cohort experience.
2. An individualized program for each student.
3. Early significant field experiences.

and for two formal assessments in the course of the program. These formal assessments are performance by the Program Review Committee, a body made up of two university professors, two Bryan principals, and the Director of the alternative program, who functions as a non-voting member.

The first formal assessment, which is formative in nature, comes relatively early in the student's program. Using the performance indicators associated with NPBEA's 21 Domains as a guide, the student does a needs assessment and outlines projects and activities by which she/her will demonstrate proficiency in each of the domains during the course of the program. To do this she/he uses a rating sheet (See Figure 1) to identify priority for development in each of the domains and a matrix (See Figure 2) reflecting the 21 domains and the activities by which development will be achieved. Upon approval by the Program Review Committee, this matrix summarizes the student's individualized development plan which she/he will pursue. It becomes a blueprint for subsequent activity in the program.

At the completion of the program the student again meets with the Program Review Committee for a summative assessment of her/his progress. If the completed program meets the criteria agreed upon at the time the program was established, with adjustments made to respond to changing conditions, the student is approved for certification.

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In January 1994 representatives from the University of Texas at Arlington began meeting with Central Office representatives from school districts in the Dallas/Fort Worth

metropolitan area. The purpose of the meetings were to determine what the ideal characteristics were that they were seeking in a principal. It was discovered that metroplex administrators unanimously wanted principals that were visionary thinkers, who were not afraid of doing things in a different manner, who were risk-takers as well as problem solvers. They wanted principals who were good with people, who could turn red situations blue. After agreement was reached as to these characteristics, intense and reflective discussion took place as to determine how to build the ideal program where the theories of educational administration could be tied to these proficiencies resulting in new administrators that could enter the profession having the skills necessary to complete the job in a successful manner.

Through these and subsequent discussions, the "Educational Leadership UTA" program was developed. Under the "Educational Leadership UTA" plan, currently employed teachers in participating school districts would apply through their principals for allocated positions. Each participating district would have a prescribed number of slots available each year for these internships. The total number of interns participating from all the districts should not exceed 25 at one time. These 25 interns will move through the graduate program simultaneously in a cohort fashion. As in the A&M program, the "Educational Leadership UTA" program actively sought the inclusion of minority applicants. Each district is given the freedom of selecting the interns of their choice. There is no university intervention in the selection other than the interns must meet standard graduate school requirements for the University of Texas at Arlington.

Participating school districts in the UTA program agree to pay their selected

interns a minimum of 75% of their previous year's teacher salary as well as carry forth their benefits to subsidize their participation. Additional outside funding is actively pursued. The students must also contract with their districts that after their year's participation in "Educational Leadership UTA", in the event that they are not placed in an administrative position within their district for the following year, they must stay in employment of that district for a one year period. This agreement was reached to

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them move from the abstract idea of portfolio assessment to the concrete reality of exactly what to include to make their portfolio evaluation authentic and professionally meaningful.

There are several items of importance to be gleaned from this study of the utilization of portfolios with administrative interns. First, most obviously, it proves that two universities can collaborate in qualitative as well as quantitative research utilizing different programmatic designs yet reaching the same results: portfolio assessment is a viable model for the appraisal of administrative interns. Both programs are resulting in the increased professional development of their interns whereby they have a tangible measure to tie their skills and proficiencies to concrete research in the importance of those same skills. Texas A&M University and the University of Texas at Arlington have each made a commitment to the enhancement of the preparation programs of school administrators. Tying the students' assessment to their portfolio development is a logical way to enhance both their learning experience as well as their job related skills. Portfolio assessment ties theory to practice. It provides the students with a framework to continue their own professional development. It gives them a tool to build upon. Hopefully they will conclude that just as their portfolios are never truly complete, neither is their learning to become leaders of learners.